Music at Convocation Hall

Music at Convocation Hall I

Marina Hoover, cello
Patricia Tao, piano

Friday, March 9, 2007
7:15 pm *Pre-Concert Introduction*
by **David Cook**
Main floor, Convocation Hall
8:00 pm *Concert*

Arts Building
University of Alberta

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Program

Sonate pour violoncelle et piano (1915) — Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

I. Prelude
II. Sérénade
III. Finale

Sonata for Cello and Piano (1948) — Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

I. Allegro-Tempo di marcia
II. Cavatine: Très calme
III. Ballabile: Très animé et gai
IV. Finale: Largo, très librement - Presto subito - Largo

Intermission

La lugubre gondola (1885) — Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

Sonata in F Major for Cello and Piano, Op. 6 (1883) — Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

I. Allegro con brio
II. Andante ma non troppo
III. Finale: Allegro vivo

Program Notes
by Emily Grieve

Claude Debussy, *Sonata for Cello and Piano*
Debussy composed the Sonata for Cello and Piano in 1915, just three years before his death. Like his other late works, the Sonata displays a significant departure in style from his earlier pieces, especially in its austerity and more abstract nature. Debussy experienced a period of depression during WWI, which drove him into a state of low creativity. The Cello Sonata, along with the two other sonatas he composed in 1915, represents the reemergence of Debussy's creativity accompanied by a new compositional style that he described as "music by itself," that was less aimed at pleasing the public ear and more directed at evoking a sense of ancient French music, while still being innovative. The influence of French masters of the past, such as Couperin, is evident in the Sonata in the use of modes, and its fragmentary, cyclic form that consists of a mosaic of contrasting musical sections with several recurring themes. Debussy also sought to express the spirit of the ancient Italian *Comedia dell'arte* in this Sonata. The Harlequin inspired its contrasting moods, which are at times lively, sometimes sarcastic, and often ethereal and poignant.

The first movement opens with a declamatory prologue that sounds remarkably natural and free; this theme serves as a basis for material in both of the ensuing movements, providing cyclic unity to the Sonata. The first theme is intimate and plaintive, but the music soon gains momentum, as more animated and passionate sections are introduced into the mosaic, including a passionate return of the declamatory melody from the prologue. The conclusion of this movement is very ethereal as the opening material is brought back, very subdued, like a fleeting shadow.

The second movement, entitled Serenade, features a rich mixture of the different sonorities that are possible for the cello. The sounds of a guitar, a mandoline, a flute, and even a tambourine are imitated by the cello throughout this movement, which seems to be a somewhat erratic combination of different chromatic motives that evoke a playful, exotic mood that is at times ironic.

The end of the second movement seems to join something already in motion when it leads into the Finale, which opens with a piano figure that brings great momentum to the lyrical freedom of the melody in the cello. This is followed by a lively, folk-like theme. The form of this movement is also like a mosaic of contrasting ideas; this is evident in the next theme to be introduced, which sounds mysterious and is slower and more subdued than the themes that preceded it. However, the animated energy and passion of the opening ideas are brought back and lead the piece to a joyful close.

Francis Poulenc, *Cello Sonata*

Poulenc's *Cello Sonata* was begun in 1940, but was put aside because he doubted his ability to compose music for solo strings. The piece was finished in 1948 due to Poulenc's admiration and affection for his friend, the cello virtuoso Pierre Fournier, with whom the composer was about to tour Italy. The Cello Sonata is Poulenc's only chamber composition in four movements. It is tuneful and spirited, and proves Poulenc's lack of confidence in this genre was unfounded.

The first movement contains two similar outer sections and a contrasting middle section. The opening is charming and witty, with playful exchanges of various melodic ideas. The inner section is slower, more lyrical and very romantic in its sweet, yet passionate melodic lines. It is in D-flat major, a key often used to evoke a dream-like quality. The return of the good-natured opening section is interrupted by a short reprise of the dreamy middle section, but the lively opening is soon repeated, coloured by joyful trills and runs on both instruments.

The second movement is one of Poulenc's most lyrical and heartfelt compositions. It is called "Cavatine," which is a name for a short aria in Italian opera, but here it has been transformed into a highly romantic expression of intense passion. The piano begins alone with a homophonic melody that sounds almost hymn-like. When the cello enters it plays a tender, introspective melody accompanied by high chords from the piano. The music becomes more flowing and builds in intensity toward the middle of the movement, as the sound of the two instruments begins to resemble a voice with orchestral accompaniment as would be present in opera. The conclusion becomes more subdued and full of haunting sweetness when the opening melody returns. There are traces of the lyrical section from the first movement throughout the second, bringing a sense of interconnection to the entire work.

The third movement, entitled "Ballabile," is in direct contrast with the second movement in its playful, lively spirit. Its title also refers to opera, where it is often applied to operatic dance movements. The music captures the energy of the Parisian music halls of which Poulenc was so fond. The charming melody of the opening section is almost identical to a theme from Poulenc's *Les Animaux Melodies*, which was also sketched in 1940. The internal lyrical section is sincere and sweet, but the scherzando mood of the opening soon returns to close the movement.

The finale features several interjections of contrasting melodic ideas. It opens with low bell-like sonorities in the piano with a majestic theme in doubled stops in the cello. The seriousness of this introduction is soon dispelled by the lively themes that follow, which are light and charming like many of the melodies found throughout the entire work. A slower internal section also recalls the dream-like lyricism found within the first movement, providing cyclic unity to the Sonata. The lively opening section returns, but it also includes a short reference to the lyrical interlude, and the majestic sound of the opening concludes the movement. The entire composition consists of an interesting patchwork of different themes that are interjected against one another; however, the contrast of liveliness and lyricism, and the motivic unity of the slower sections bring consistency to the entire work.

Franz Liszt, *La Lugubre Gondolas*

La Lugubre Gondolas were among Liszt's last compositions. They were composed in 1882, while the elderly Liszt was residing in Venice. Although they are often considered to be two versions of the same piece, they differ significantly from one another and are effective when performed as a set. Both pieces depict funeral processions of gondolas that Liszt observed on the canals of Venice. *La Lugubre Gondolas* represent the extreme stylistic shift in his music, which in his youth was full of exuberance, but in old age was reduced to a strange, shadowy expression of sorrow. Although the musical texture of Liszt's late pieces was significantly reduced, his harmonic experimentation increased with the use of extreme dissonance and a free approach to tonality. The tonal language of *La Lugubre Gondolas* is so remote that at times it is difficult to determine if the music has a tonal center; there is little or no harmonic resolution, and both pieces seem to prominently feature unresolved dissonances, especially the tritone. In his late music, Liszt was no longer trying to please an audience, but he was trying to express emotion, and create a radical approach to composition that in his words would "...throw a lance into the boundless realm of the future." In a way the act of reaching into the unknown tonally helps to express the mystery of death, which is central to *La Lugubre Gondolas*; also, the intense unresolved dissonances in both pieces evoke the sorrow and darkness associated with death. Because of the loss of many dear friends, and his own failing physical condition, Liszt's final years were plagued by sadness. *La Lugubre Gondolas* are definitely an expression of this immense despair. In a letter to Lina Ramann, Liszt refers to these pieces, and advises his friend not to fear their title because "...As you know, I bear in my heart a deep sorrow; now and then it has to break out in music."

The second *La Lugubre Gondola* opens with an extended recitative-like introduction that leads into a dissonant lament accompanied by an ostinato similar to the one in the first piece. The darkness is interrupted by a harp-like effect on the piano; however, the rhythm of the accompaniment is similar to the ostinato, and the chromatic movement of the high chords adds mystery to their sweetness. This is followed by a passionate return of the lyrical melody, which grows to a desperate outburst of sorrow. Funerary heavy chords begin a painful chromatic descent in both instruments that precedes the final return of the recitative-like music, which seems to fade out into oblivion.

Richard Strauss, *Cello Sonata*

Like many of Strauss's early works, the *Cello Sonata* was written for one of his friends, Hans Wilhan, the principal cellist of the Munich court orchestra. Strauss was attending the University of Munich during the winter of 1882-1883, and it was here that he was exposed to philosophy, aesthetics, and the works of Shakespeare, which awakened him intellectually and stimulated his musical growth. The *Cello Sonata* is one of a rapid succession of pieces composed during this period of heightened creativity. It was a success, and was hailed by Oscar Franz, a horn player from the Dresden court orchestra, as: "indeed a splendid work, full of original feeling, and everything flows so wholesomely in it." Like the early works of Mendelssohn, whose influence is audible, the *Cello Sonata* abounds in youthful energy; although the piece is fairly conservative, Strauss proves himself capable of mastering the forms of the past, while still expressing himself creatively.

The *Cello Sonata* opens with a grand fanfare of homophonic chords on the piano punctuated by double stops on the cello. This joyful proclamation leads to the lyrical first theme, which begins with a charming melody in the cello above a sparkling piano accompaniment. The music soon grows in intensity, as the piano and cello answer each other with dramatic figurations. The second theme, which is in the minor mode, is more subdued; it starts with homophonic chords on the piano, but becomes more passionate, brimming with romantic flavour. After a Coda based on the introduction to the movement, the development begins with sequential movement, giving way to an impressive four-part fugue that eventually builds up to a passionate climax from which the recapitulation of the majestic introduction bursts forth.

The second movement is like a song without words, with the cello singing above piano accompaniment, which at times sounds almost orchestral. Like many songs and operatic arias, this movement is in ternary form, and the intensity of its musical expression reaches operatic proportions at several moments. The opening features dark chords in the piano beneath a plaintive melody in the cello. In the middle section, the darkness fades into the major mode and the piano accompaniment becomes more energetic with repeated chords that propel the music forward. After the return of the opening section, there is a brief restatement of the major-mode material. Despite its tender sweetness, the introspective theme from the opening returns to end the piece, as it eventually rises towards a heartfelt expression of longing in the high registers of both instruments.

Playful motives in the cello and piano answer each other in a teasing manner in the beginning of the finale. Once the music begins to build in momentum, it sparkles with joy. Despite a more lyrical second theme, the energy is maintained throughout the exposition. In the development section, the music builds to a wonderfully orchestral climax worthy of Strauss's larger genres. Upon the return of the opening, the amiable music seems to display the creative excitement of a young composer at the height of musical growth, displaying his ingenious skill with charming ease.

Marina Hoover, cello
Two-time Grammy nominee Marina Hoover was born in Edmonton, Canada. She studied cello under David Soyer at the Curtis Institute of Music, and obtained a Masters at Yale under Aldo Parisot. She was founding cellist of the St. Lawrence String Quartet, which rocketed to international prominence after winning both the Young Concert Artists auditions and the Banff International String Quartet Competition.

In her 13 years with the St. Lawrence, Ms Hoover performed at The White House, Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, the 92nd Street "Y", The Kennedy Center, Wigmore Hall (London), Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), and Theatre De Ville (Paris). In addition, the quartet made regular appearances at Tanglewood, the Newport Festival, Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, and the Ottawa Chamber Music Festival, as well as over 1000 other appearances throughout North and South America, Europe, Japan, Australia, and Viet Nam. The St. Lawrence has been the resident quartet at Spoletto USA since 1996.

The Quartet's major recording label debut, Schumann String Quartets 1 and 3, won the Juno award for Best Classical recording (1999), and the Preis der Deutschen Schallplatten Kritik (2001). It was voted one of the most important classical recordings of the 1990s by Opus Magazine. In 2002, the St. Lawrence's third CD, Yiddishbbuk: The Chamber Works of Oswaldo Golijov was nominated for two Grammy awards, including Best Classical Chamber Music Recording and Best Composer, as well as a Juno Award for Best Classical Recording.

Ms Hoover's solo career has included concertos with Toronto Symphony, Red Deer Symphony, Symphony Nova Scotia, Belo Horizonte Symphony (Brazil), Edmonton Symphony, Saskatoon Symphony, Yale Chamber Orchestra, and the Curtis Orchestra. She has performed recitals throughout North America and most recently at Northwestern University's Lutkin Hall. She appeared in the movie "Illuminata", directed by John Turturo. A decade after winning the Banff International String Quartet Competition, she returned to Banff to serve as a juror for the competition in 2002.

For 4 years Ms Hoover was Artist-in-residence at Stanford University, where she co-directed the string program and designed and ran a summer institute for chamber musicians. She has been visiting Artist-in-residence at the University of Toronto, Distinguished Visitor at the University of Alberta and Artist in Residence at the Banff Centre for the Arts. She participated in numerous community outreach programs with the St. Lawrence in Kansas City, Washington D.C., Palo Alto, and other cities

Ms Hoover currently maintains an active performing schedule of both solo and chamber music. Recent performances include appearances with the Chicago String Quartet, Chicago Chamber Musicians, the Ameropa trio, and with pianist James Giles. She taught chamber music at Northwestern University School of Music, and currently teaches at the Music Institute of Chicago.

Patricia Tao, pianist

Pianist Patricia Tao, founding member of the Guild Trio from 1988-1998, has led an active career as both soloist and chamber musician. As pianist of the Trio, she performed throughout the United States and Europe, with appearances in major North American cities, including New York, Los Angeles, San Diego, Toronto, Vancouver, and Washington, D.C. With the Trio, she won the prestigious USIA Artistic Ambassador competition, resulting in a seven-country European tour. The following year, her trio was awarded the position of Trio-in-Residence at the Tanglewood Music Center, where they were lauded by the Boston Globe as a "beautiful new landmark" on the concert stage.

As soloist, Dr Tao toured the United States for Columbia Artist's Community Concerts series, and in 1990, was reinvited as an "Artistic Ambassador" for the USIA, with recitals in Portugal, Spain, Italy, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria. Winner of numerous awards, she was the recipient of the Leonard Bernstein scholarship and the David McCord Arts Award upon graduation from Harvard University. Summer festival credits include the International Musicians Seminar in Prussia Cove, England, Rutgers Summerfest, the Cape May Music Festival, Apple Hill Music Festival, the Summer Serenades at the Staller Center, Niederstotzingen Festival in Germany, and the International Arts Festival in France. Recent solo performances have included recitals on the University of Alberta's recital series, Mozart's *Piano Concerto K. 414* with string quartet at the Winspear Centre, and solo performances with the Hong Kong Classical Youth Orchestra, made up of both traditional Chinese and Western instruments.

Dr Tao's live performances have been broadcast on National Public Radio's "Performance Today," WNYC's "Around New York," WQXR's "The Listening Room, the public television series "Premiere Performances" out of St. Louis, Chicago's WFMT and "Our Music"and "In Performance" on CBC. Dedicated to the performance of new works, Dr Tao (with the Guild Trio) commissioned and premiered numerous works, including William Bolcom's "Spring Trio," Sheila Silver's "To the Spirit Unconquered," Harvey Sollberger's "From Winter's Frozen Stillness," and works by Bradley Lubman, Daniel Weymouth, Peter Winkler, and Perry Goldstein. Previous recordings include Sheila Silver's "To the Spirit Unconquered" on the CRI label and a solo CD on the Arktos label featuring works of Schubert, Liszt and Corigliano. Her newest recording of cello and piano sonatas with cellist Marina Hoover will be released on the Centaur label in March 2007.

An avid chamber musician, Dr Tao regularly performs frequently with Ms. Hoover, with most recent performances in Edmonton, New York and Chicago. Other collaborations have included performances with violist Marcus Thompson, violinist Scott St. John, and French clarinetist Michel Lethiec. In 2002, Dr Tao launched *Hear's to Your Health Concerts,* held at the Walter Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre at the University of Alberta. These intimate chamber concerts feature musicians from the Edmonton musical community as well as international artists.

Dr Tao received her undergraduate education at Harvard University, a masters degree with distinction from Indiana University and her doctorate from the State University of New York at Stony Brook, where her principal teachers were Leonard Shure, Gyorgy Sebok and Gilbert Kalish and in chamber music, Bernard Greenhouse, Leon Fleisher, Julius Levine and Timothy Eddy. She has given master classes at numerous schools, including the University of Ottawa, Ithaca College, and the Conservatories of Barcelona, Prague and Bratislava. She has held performance residencies at the Guild Hall in East Hampton, New York, the medical school of the State University of New York at Stony Brook, and the University of Virginia. She taught at Western Washington University and in 2002, was appointed Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Alberta.

Upcoming Events

March
10 Saturday, 10:00 am
Choral Masterclass
Visiting Artists
Vancouver Chamber Choir
Free admission

10 Saturday, 8:00 pm
Visiting Artists Concert
Vancouver Chamber Choir
Jon Washburn, Conductor
Music of the Americas in its March 10 concert. The program includes works by composers from Argentina (Guastavino), Brazil (Oswald), Cuba (Silva), Mexico (Franco) and the US (Bernstein, Paulus and Whitacre) as well as Canada (Daunais, Houdy and Robinovitch).
Admission: $15/stud/sen, $20/adult

11 Sunday, 3:00 pm
Visiting Artist Recital
Richard Cionco, piano
Bagatelles op. 126: Beethoven
Sonata No 32, Op 111: Beethoven
Sonata no. 30, Op 109: Beethoven
Six Musical Moments, Op 16: Rachmaninov
Admission: $15/stud/sen, $20/adult

11 Sunday, 7:00 pm
ARMTA Composers Celebration 2007
Magdalena Adamek-Kurgan, piano
Works by Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, and Szymanowski
Tickets at the door: $10/stud/sen, $15/adult. For more information, email: wosadnik@ualberta.ca

12 Monday, 12:00 pm
Noon Hour Organ Recital
A variety of organ repertoire played by students, staff and guests of the University of Alberta Department of Music
Free admission

12 Monday, 3:30 pm
Piano Masterclass
Visiting Artist Richard Cionco
Free admission

17 Saturday, 7:00 pm
Northern Alberta Honor Band
Angela Schroeder, Conductor
Admission: $10/stud/sen, $15/adult

18 Sunday, 8:00 pm
Master of Music Recital
Kimberley Denis, soprano
Free admission

19 Monday,
Visiting Artist
Wendy Markosky, organ
12:00 pm - Organ Masterclass
(Graduate Keyboard Seminar)
Free admission
4:00 pm - Visiting Artist Lecture Recital (Graduate Keyboard Seminar)
Free admission

20 Tuesday
Visiting Artist Neil Cockburn, organ
1:00 pm - Lecture Recital
(Graduate Keyboard Seminar)
Free admission
4:00 pm - Organ Masterclass
Visiting Artist Neil Cockburn
(Graduate Keyboard Seminar)
Free admission

department of Music

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